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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0358

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0359

RUMIAAA/USOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000717

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STATE FOR WHA

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: HONDURAN COUP: POLITICAL WRAP-UP 07/27/09

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 658 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (U) Summary: This is another in a series of daily round-ups of political news in the aftermath of the June 28 forcible removal and exile of President Manuel Zelaya from Honduras. End Summary.

Zelaya Spends the Weekend at the Border

¶2. (U) Zelaya spent July 24 - 27 on the border of Nicaragua and Honduras, where he called upon his supporters to "maintain the resistance." Arias stated publicly that Zelaya's presence at the border was not helping Honduras reach a peaceful resolution.

¶3. (U) The border crossing at Las Manos across from where Zelaya has been encamped July 23-27 is the key commercial entry point along the route that connects Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua to the northern ports of Honduras. An estimated 500 trucks headed for Puerto Cortes in Honduras were trapped at the Nicaraguan border over the weekend. Military presence and curfews along the Honduras/Nicaragua border have hurt commercial activity. De facto Defense Minister Adolfo Leonel Sevilla said that they are working with the Department of El Paraiso and the border towns to restore normalcy to the commercial and daily life of the department.

¶4. (U) The Armed Forces (HOAF) leadership publicly stated over the weekend that they support the San Jose agreement. Chief of Defense MG Romeo Vasquez Velasquez affirmed that the HOAF is under instructions not to fire upon the people and that the only weapons they carry are clubs, shields, and teargas.

Reactions to CODEL

¶5. (U) Pro-Micheletti "El Heraldo" reported July 26 that Congressman Connie Mack had clearly stated before arriving in Honduras that Zelaya's removal was not a coup and that the judicial bodies and the National Congress abided by the constitution when they acted. Local press reported that de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos Lopez Contreras said that the U.S. Congressmen who visited Honduras July 25 - 26 saw the reality of the situation in Honduras and that the

U.S. media has not accurately portrayed the political situation. He stated that Zelaya has to choose between staying at the border and re-entering into dialogue.

Zelaya Supporters Vow to Continue Strikes

¶ 16. (U) The labor and teachers unions who support Zelaya announced July 27 that they will continue with roadblocks and strikes by all public employees. The Federation of Honduran Teachers (FOMH) announced that July 27 they will begin a general and indefinite strike. This time the strike will reportedly include both public and private schools.

Press Highlights Corruption in Zelaya Administration

¶ 17. (U) "El Heraldo" reported that, according to the Public Ministry, USD 6.7 million of public money was spent to fund the fourth urn and that an addition USD 2.6 million was illegally taken from the Central Bank. (Note: It is difficult to gauge the veracity of these allegations. There are indications that Zelaya was using public funds for his Fourth Urn campaign. However, in the wake of the coup, the Micheletti regime has aggressively sought to prosecute Zelaya officials and seems bent on applying "the law for my enemies," which undermines the credibility of these legal procedures. End Note.)

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TSE Advocates for November 29 Elections

¶ 18. (U) Local press reports that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) will propose that elections take place November 29 as planned, saying it would be logistically difficult to change the election date (Comment: Post's own assessment is that moving the date earlier would indeed require a significant increase in funding to the TSE, but is feasible. End Comment.). The TSE expects to have the economic support of the international community for elections and believes that the legitimate and transparent electoral process will normalize the political situation in Honduras.

Ambassador Holds Off-the-record Meeting with Honduran Press

¶ 19. (C) Ambassador Llorens held an off-the-record meeting with members of the Honduran press to reiterate the U.S. position and reinforce the idea that despite our non-recognition of the de facto government, the Ambassador has remained in country with a low profile to continue working towards reestablishing the democratic and constitutional order and in support of President Arias' mediation. The Ambassador took questions on our policy regarding foreign assistance to Honduras, possible revocation of de facto regime member's visas and our USG position on allegations of human rights violations. In attendance were reporters from La Tribuna, Tiempo, El Heraldo, El Patriota and Hondudiario for print; Radio HRN, Radio America, Radio Globo and Radio Cadena Voces for radio; and channels 11, 30, 42, 36, 13 and Telenoticias for local television.
LLORENS